

26 January 2017

## **Open Letter to African Union Heads of State and Government on Supporting an Open and Genuine National Dialogue in South Sudan**

Your Excellencies,

We, the undersigned organizations from the continent in solidarity with the people of South Sudan, urge you to seize a potentially powerful opportunity for a sustained peace in South Sudan by committing your leadership to the development of an open and inclusive national dialogue for our continent's newest nation at the 28<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union. Your support would give the people of South Sudan confidence to move forward, knowing that the AU stands in their interest.

Your Excellencies, our South Sudanese brothers and sisters continue to suffer from seemingly perpetual cycles of violence with little hope for respite from their leadership. They face a political crisis which continues to fuel horrific violence and atrocities committed by armed actors affiliated with both government and opposition forces. They have been subjected to the devastating effects of a deep economic crisis that makes life unbearable. Vast numbers of people have been displaced from their homes and are on the brink of famine.

It is in this context that President Salva Kiir [launched a call](#) for a national dialogue on 14 December 2016 to "save the country from disintegration and usher in a new era of peace, stability and prosperity." This is a worthy intention. South Sudan is in desperate need of a solution to its prolonged crisis. But worthy intentions bear no value if they are not followed by genuine action and commitment. This is where we believe the AU must hold South Sudan's leaders to account.

National dialogues can be a powerful tool to prevent or end further conflict and ensure national healing and reconciliation if conducted in a credible, inclusive and participatory manner. In the past, they have been used to mediate a peaceful dialogue to enable the bridging of political and religious divisions. However, national dialogues can also be deliberately misused by leaders to consolidate their grip on power and delay democratic processes.

Your Excellencies, it is in this regard that we urge the Assembly of the African Union at the 28<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session to support South Sudan's national dialogue by:

- Stressing the need for the National Dialogue process to be conducted in a credible, independent and impartial manner and for the facilitators of the dialogue to be supported to convene all major stakeholders to agree on how they will work together to restore peace and stability to South Sudan;
- Ensuring that the national dialogue is citizen-driven and open to full public participation, and that it has a clear mandate, structure, rules and procedures;
- Ensuring that it addresses the root causes of South Sudan's conflict;
- Affirming the need for a credible implementation plan, so the people of South Sudan can be assured that the process is genuine and will lead to concrete changes to their lives and the future of their country.

Your Excellencies, we come together to stand in solidarity with the people of South Sudan to ensure

that their voices are heard in shaping their country's destiny. Their hopes and aspirations are one and the same as those held by the rest of our continent's people. Together, we encourage you to manifest this solidarity by helping South Sudan forge a durable path to peace.

Please accept, Your Excellencies, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Signed,

1. Abibiman Foundation, Ghana
2. Action Green For Trade and Sustainable Development
3. Africa Atrocities Watch
4. Africa Development Interchange Network, Cameroon
5. Africa Youth Initiative Network, Uganda
6. African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, Sudan
7. Africans Rising For Peace, Justice and Dignity
8. AIDS Accountability International, South Africa
9. Botswana Centre for Human Rights
10. Center for Conflict Resolution, Uganda
11. CIVICUS World Alliance for Citizen Participation, South Africa
12. Conseil National des ONG de Développement de la RDC
13. Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, Zimbabwe
14. Darfur Bar Association, Sudan
15. Daughters of Mumbi Global Resource Center, Kenya
16. Defend Defenders - East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project
17. Denis Hurley Peace Institute, South Africa
18. Development for Peace Education, Lesotho
19. East African Civil Society Organisations' Forum, Tanzania
20. East African Civil Society Organisations' Forum
21. Face Past for Future Foundation, Uganda
22. Fadhili Teens, Tanzania
23. Fahamu
24. Fedus Youth Ministries, Malawi
25. Forum pour le Renforcement de la Société Civile
26. Foundation for Human Rights Initiative in Uganda
27. Hurriyat Sudan
28. IndustriALL Global Union Sub Sahara Africa Region
29. International Commission of Jurists, Kenya
30. International Council on Social Welfare, Uganda
31. International Refugee Rights Initiative
32. Isha Human Rights Organization
33. Kakute Projects, Tanzania
34. National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders, Uganda
35. Nhimbe Trust, Zimbabwe
36. Nouveaux Droits de l'Homme Cameroun

37. Pan African Lawyers Union
38. Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network
39. Partnership for Justice, Nigeria
40. Peace Pen Communications, Kenya
41. Rencontre Africaine pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme, Senegal
42. Réseau des Citoyens Probes
43. Réseau des Défenseurs des Droits Humains en Afrique Centrale
44. Réseau des Plate-formes Nationales d'ONG d'Afrique Centrale, RD-Congo
45. SADC Council on NGOs, Botswana
46. South Sudan Human Rights Defenders Network
47. Southern Africa Trade Union Coordination Council
48. Southern and Eastern African Trade Information and Negotiations Institute, Uganda
49. Sudan Social Development Organization
50. The African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies, Gambia
51. The African Women's Development and Communications Network (FEMNET)
52. The Centre for Citizens' Participation on the African Union
53. The Centre for Governance and Public Participation, Malawi
54. The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum
55. Trauma Centre, Cameroon
56. West Africa Civil Society Institute
57. West African Human Right Defenders Network
58. Women and Resources in East and Southern Africa
59. Young Women Development, Zimbabwe
60. Zimbabwe Human Rights Association